



## FACT SHEET

### Antifreeze



Antifreeze is a substance added to a solvent, such as water, to lower its freezing point. Antifreeze is typically added to water in the cooling system of an internal-combustion engine so that it can be cooled below the freezing point of pure water (32 degrees F) without freezing. Ethylene glycol is the most widely used automotive cooling-system antifreeze, although methanol, ethanol, isopropyl alcohol, and propylene glycol are also used.

Ethylene glycol is highly poisonous. It has a sweet smell and taste that is appealing to pets and children. Waste antifreeze contains heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, and chromium in high enough levels to potentially make it a regulated hazardous waste. So it's very important to wipe up spills and drips and handle both new and used antifreeze properly. The [Kentucky Regional Poison Center](http://www.krcpc.org) recommends that you keep antifreeze, windshield washer fluid, motor oils and similar materials in locked storage.

Antifreeze can also be harmful to wildlife and the environment. It should not be dumped on land or discharged into a sanitary sewer, storm drain, ditch, dry well, or septic system.

#### ANTIFREEZE DO'S

- ✓ Recycle your antifreeze at a facility that uses an antifreeze recycling machine.
- ✓ Consider switching to the less toxic propylene glycol antifreeze. Note: Check first to see if using PG antifreeze will void your car's warranty. Also, don't mix the two types of antifreeze since it will harm your car's engine. (If you use antifreeze in camp or recreational vehicle toilets, definitely use PG-based antifreezes.)
- ✓ Follow safety rules if you change your own antifreeze. Buy only what you need. Wipe up spills and drips *immediately* and dispose of rags in a covered container. Keep children and pets out of the area while you are draining radiator fluid. Use "dedicated" collection equipment including funnels and transfer pans. Give away leftover antifreeze or seal the remainder out of reach of children and pets.
- ✓ Keep antifreeze and "spent" or used antifreeze in two separate, labeled closed containers. Mixing new and used contaminates the whole batch.
- ✓ Check with your local government, water treatment plant, repair shops and car dealerships. They may collect antifreeze or know of other safe disposal options.

You can access information about facilities that accept antifreeze in your community by going to the Earth 911 site at [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) and typing in your ZIP code. Or you can call 1-800-CLEANUP.

#### ANTIFREEZE DON'TS

- Don't change coolant unnecessarily – check your owner's manual.
- Don't dispose of antifreeze in a storm drain, septic tank or dry well.
- Don't pour antifreeze on the ground.



**Remember:** antifreeze is deadly. Symptoms may not show up for hours. If you suspect a person has consumed antifreeze, call poison control right away. The emergency hotline is 1 (800) 222-1222 or, in Metro Louisville, (502) 589-8222. If an animal has ingested antifreeze, call your veterinarian.

### Source material

- *Antifreeze*, a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Publication online at <http://www.epa.gov/garbage/antifree.htm> Accessed Jan. 18, 2005.
- *How Do I Dispose of Antifreeze*, an American Trucking Associations publication, online at <http://www.greentruck.com/waste/antifreeze/1102.html> Accessed Jan. 18, 2005.
- *Antifreeze*, a NOAA Safety and Environmental Compliance Office publication at <http://www.seco.noaa.gov/ENV/Factsheets/antifreeze.html> Accessed Jan. 18, 2005.
- *Antifreeze Poses Perils for Pets and Wildlife*, Maine Department of Environmental Protection publication, online at <http://www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/docgw/antifreeze.htm> Accessed Jan. 18, 2005.



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